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News Release

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Burnsville Man Sentenced to 750 Years in Federal Prison on Child Pornography Charges

Minneapolis - Earlier today Bruce W. Betcher, age 53, of Burnsville, Minnesota, was sentenced to a total of 750 years in federal prison. Betcher was convicted in May of 2006 on 24 counts of manufacturing child pornography, one count of receipt of child pornography, and one count of possession of child pornography. The total sentence consisted of 30 years on each of the 24 manufacturing counts, 20 years on the receipt count, and 10 years on the possession count, with each sentence to be served consecutively.

In imposing the sentence today, James M. Rosenbaum, Chief Judge of the United States District Court in Minneapolis, called Betcher's crime "an utterly unconscionable act." He also said of Betcher's criminal behavior, which involved digital photographs taken of minor relatives engaged in sexually explicit conduct, "There are some crimes for which there is no excuse."

Betcher was arrested on September 23, 2005, following an intense investigation that began when 78 images of child pornography were found on a computer seized by the law enforcement

(MORE)

officers in Atlanta, Georgia. In one of those pictures, a Brownie uniform was visible, which through computer forensics and investigation was identified as belonging to a Minnesota troop member. Based on that information, the girls involved in the picture were ultimately identified, and Betcher was named a suspect.

On September 19, 2005, a state search warrant was executed at Betcher's Burnsville home, where, among other things, investigators seized three computers, one of which housed a collection of child pornography, and an Olympus camera, which was used to take the pornographic pictures of the girls. According to a superseding indictment filed in this case, Betcher produced no fewer than 29 images of child pornography, all in his house. Betcher was arrested for his crimes on September 23, 2005, and has remained incarcerated ever since. In May of 2006, after a week-long jury trial, he was found guilty on all 26 counts filed against him.

Following today's sentencing, Claude Arnold, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") Office in Bloomington, Minnesota, said, "Identifying those who sexually exploit children is one of the most important responsibilities we have. By working closely with our law enforcement partners, ICE agents were able to trace child pornography images discovered in Atlanta to their origins in a Burnsville basement."

While ICE led the investigation into this case, tremendous assistance was provided by the Burnsville Police Department, the Dakota County Sheriff's Office, and the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children (MICAC) Task Force.

The MICAC was created in 2000 through a grant from the U.S. Justice Department's Internet Crimes Against Children program. The MICAC Task Force is one of forty-six federally funded task

(MORE)

forces in the country dedicated to this issue. The number of law enforcement agencies participating in the MICAC Task Force reflects the strong commitment Minnesota has made to its children and their safety.

Members of the MICAC Task Force include the Sheriff's Office in the counties of Hennepin, Ramsey, Anoka, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Dakota, Murray, Polk, Rice, and Washington; the police department in the cities of Minneapolis, Baxter, Burnsville, Fergus Falls, Hutchinson, Mankato, Moorhead, White Bear Lake, and Woodbury; the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation; the South Dakota Department of Criminal Investigation; and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. Additionally, a number of federal law enforcement agencies have cooperated with the MICAC Task Force, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Secret Service, and the U.S. Postal Service.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood ("PSC"), a national initiative that encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces to investigate and prosecute cases that involve the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet. PSC urges that law enforcement efforts be complemented by community-wide campaigns to assist victims of exploitation and to educate parents, other adults, and children about Internet safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in thirty-three children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online each year. One in four children experiences unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material on the Internet each year. And, more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week. Moreover, recent research conducted by the

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Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates a strong correlation between possessing or distributing child pornography and committing sexual-contact crimes against children.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Erica H. MacDonald and Tracy L. Perzel.

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